

# Floods in south africa

Countries



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## **Introduction**

La Nina influenced flooding took place in South Africa on January 24 of 2011. Heavy rain caused the widespread flooding in South Africa. This heavy rainfall is common during La Nina summers in South Africa. rainfall for the month of January had been reported to be nearly 10 times the average in parts of the country. Other countries besides South Africa had also been hit by heavy rain and La Nina was blamed for the flooding across Australia and the Philippines.

More than 100 people lost their lives in floods that took place across South Africa. The majority of the deaths were in KwaZulu-Natal and damages were estimated at R300 million. By the end of January , heavy rain had been widespread across the country and eight of South Africa's nine provinces were declared disaster areas by the South African government. This assignment takes a look at what flooding is all about, it explains what La Nina is and looks at the impact floods have. This assignment focuses on flooding in South Africa with particular focus on flooding in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. Sub-headings have been used for easy navigation of the assignment.

## **Defining Flooding**

Flooding from a hydrological sense can be defined strictly as a rise, which is usually brief in the water level of a water body , this water body can be a river, dam and accumulated rainwater in a failed drainage system. (national geographic) The term flood simply implies a progressive and abnormal increase in the elevation of surface level of a water body until it reaches a maximum height, at this point the water level will slowly drop back to its

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normal level, at this point it is important to state that these actions that take place usually take place within a certain period of time, therefore floods are episodic events where water rises and then eventually drops back to its normal surface level.

Another characteristic of flooding is that flooding may result in the overflowing of water onto areas which are not normally submerged in water.

(national geographic)

### **What is La Nina**

La Nina conditions occur when Pacific trade winds blow stronger than usual, this pushes sun-warmed surface water further west and increases the upwelling of cold water in eastern regions. Together with the atmospheric effects of southern oscillation, cooler water brings drought to western South America and heavy rains to south Africa , eastern Australia and Indonesia.

(national geographic)

### **Impact of Floods**

South Africa is a producer of corn, soybeans, and wheat. Farmers usually welcome wetter-than-normal conditions, However the heavy rains that took place were so harsh they damaged crops. In addition to the damaged crop, field harvesting was at a halt as the fields were saturated . (south Africanhealthreview) Such conditions have a negative impact on south Africa's economy, this is because as a result of the floods damaging crops a shortage would take place, this means that less exports of crop products took place, in addition to that crop product prices would also have to go up in attempt to cover the cost of damages that took place. In the opinion of this assignment, it seems that flooding as is a disaster that can be both natural

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or human action related, has the same effect on every class of people, it does not choose nor hit poor areas or rich areas only. floods are spontaneous and will affect everyone that happens to be in the region of the flood.

## **Measures Put In Place To Handle Flooding**

When we come to the topic of handling flooding we need to introduce the concept of disaster management. a disaster can be caused by human or nature, they are events that are sometimes unpredictable, it is therefore essential for governments to manage all disasters that occur. for this reason, disaster management planning should be a key point of any government. Disaster management aims to reduce the occurrence of disasters and to reduce the impact of those that cannot be prevented. The government white paper and act on disaster management define the roles of local authorities as well as provincial and national government in disaster management. (government Gazette) In accordance with the white paper and act on disaster management, every municipality should have a disaster management plan as part of their integrated development plan. having plans in place helps reduce the damage potential of disasters and in some cases results in the prevention of a disaster. (disaster management act)

Protection services departments, which deal with traffic policing, fire brigades and law enforcement should always be on high alert when disasters strike, this implies that they should always be on stand-by. disaster management act) When disasters such as flooding occur and exceeds the capacity of a local authority; district, provincial or national parties should be notified. this means that any situation that is too large for a local authority to handle should be reported. by doing this, doors become open for parties

such as volunteer organisations such as the Red cross, St Johns and national Sea rescue to give help where needed. (disaster management act) In summary, disaster management activities , include the co-ordination of disaster response agents, a compilation and exercising of plans and disaster management education and training. When all the above mentioned are put into action properly, it becomes an effective way to handle disasters such as flooding.

## **Human Impact on Flooding**

As stated earlier in this assignment, disasters do not only occur natural , human impact or behaviour can also cause a disaster , this assignment is of the opinion that the following points which focus on human activities and actions that can cause flooding are the main human reasons why floods can occur:

- The diversion of all water to rivers through drainage systems can cause rivers to overflow. this is because water is transported at a faster rate through drainage systems than it would if the water flowed naturally.
- Cities and towns are man-made, they have a lot of buildings , tarred roads and concrete pavements. this limits the amount of water that can be soaked and absorbed into the ground. Humans cut down forests; as a result loose soils run into the river, this causes a rising of the river bed, when this happens the chances of flooding increases as the carrying capacity of the river is decreased.
- Architects and urban planners tend to straighten rivers in an attempt to control flooding, However as the river no longer meander, further down the stream water suddenly slows down and this causes flooding

## Conclusion

In conclusion, it is clear that flooding is a serious disaster that can cause both economic and structural damage. flooding in the KwaZulu-Natal province left farmers with damaged crops and also took the lives of many south Africans.

It is also evident that if disaster management plans are put in place, the effects of flooding can be decreased especially if proper planning is done in reference to human causes of flooding. This assignment , with all the above information given thought, concludes that in the case of KwaZulu-Natal and human impact on flooding, floods could have been avoided or at the very least the impacts thereof could have been lessened.

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